

**National Congress of American Indians Executive Council Winter Session  
March 4, 2008**

President Garcia, Chairman Allen, Honorable Tribal Leaders, and distinguished Tribal representatives, on behalf of the Department of Energy, I want to thank you for allowing me to join you today, Let me also offer my best wishes for a productive meeting, as well as a prosperous year for your communities and citizens.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you, and it is in the spirit of the unique government-to-government relationship that Tribal nations and the United States share, that I come today to make you aware of new work that my office is undertaking with Indian Country concerning electrification.

An important part of the mission of the United States Department of Energy is to advance the national, economic, and energy security of the Nation, and to promote scientific and technological innovation in support of that mission.

Within the Department, the Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability (OE) leads national efforts to modernize the electric grid, to enhance the security and reliability of the energy infrastructure, and to facilitate recovery from disruptions to energy supply. The electricity office leads the DOE's efforts to modernize the grid through the development and implementation of sound policies pertaining to electric grid reliability as we manage the research, development, and demonstration of advanced electric infrastructure technologies.

Within the scope of its mission, OE addresses the important task of electrification across the nation, from our intensely populated urban areas to the most remote reaches. A lack of robust electrical infrastructure can certainly mean reduced electric reliability; but it can also create challenges to building and maintaining the other critical infrastructures that support the health, safety, and welfare of communities and their citizens. Without adequate infrastructure in place, developing and maintaining a sustainable economy is difficult.

Of course, many Tribal lands are among the most remote regions of the United States. In terms of basic utilities and infrastructure, the residents of Tribal lands are in many instances among the most underserved consumers in the nation.

The residents of many regions of Tribal lands, both Tribal members and non-members, generally experience a lack of electrification to a greater degree than the national average.

Title V of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, which is entitled "Indian Energy", directs the Department of Energy to promote Indian tribal energy development. To facilitate development of DOE policies and actions in fulfillment of Title V and other potential work related to Indian Country, OE is undertaking a new government-to-government initiative to develop comprehensive data on the status of electrification on Tribal lands. This initiative is known as the Tribal Lands Electrification Study.

OE will be conducting this study in coordination with the DOE Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs. Chickasaw Nation Industries Advisory Services, LLC, a Tribally-owned IT and Professional Services company within Chickasaw Nation Industries, has been contracted by OE for critical support in conducting the study.

We believe the data gathered through this study will create a solid foundation for the establishment of new Federal and Tribal efforts to expand electricity and energy development, and thereby bolster Tribal capabilities to provide for the health, safety and welfare of their citizens.

Indeed, the DOE's recognition of, and respect for, the Tribal ability of governmental self-determination is a fundamental aspect of the Tribal Lands Electrification Study. I would expect that any resulting joint efforts at electrification deployment or energy infrastructure development will be premised on this important point.

I would like to now give a brief overview of how this study will be undertaken. To start, we will seek to obtain data on current overall electrification rates and the state of electrification, in general, on Tribal lands across the United States. We will directly engage Tribal government in this effort and hope to gather this data through survey and direct outreach techniques.

This information will help illuminate the underlying conditions that predicate the lack of a robust electrical infrastructure, the potential opportunities for development, and the desires of the Tribes to increase the level of electrification on their lands.

Initially, a survey instrument will be sent to the leadership and relevant offices of every Federally recognized Tribal entity in the United States. A team of outreach specialists will then contact each Tribe to ensure receipt of the survey. The outreach team will be available to answer any questions and to assist in the completion of the survey. OE intends the entire survey process to be interactive, including providing Tribes with human points of contact throughout the process.

The team of outreach specialists will be prepared for questions and coordination, and facilitate Tribal participation in the survey through automated tools. The targeted outreach will assist Tribal entities in understanding and completing the survey instrument, as appropriate. National inter-Tribal organizations and other key Indian Country partners will also be engaged in the process.

Survey questions will seek to develop a better understanding of Tribal electrification in a number of areas including:

- The number of homes and businesses that currently have electricity service and the number that do not;
- The reliability of current electric service;

- The suppliers of electricity and their willingness and ability to supply all of the needs of the Tribal lands;
- The perceived quality of life and economic development issues related to increased electrification;
- Tribal development programs contemplated, or already in place, to increase electrification;
- Impediments to increasing the level of electrification, and;
- Any additional comments that Tribal governments may have to offer.

Specific responses to the survey questions will be held in confidence and the data aggregated to provide an overall understanding of the issue. The underlying data will not be provided to any other organizations for any other purposes without the direct consent from the Tribal government. The DOE will respectfully request that Tribes respond to all questions, if possible, assuming that they have the necessary information or can obtain the necessary information to provide a response.

All answers will help provide greater clarity into the existing state of electrification on Tribal lands and related efforts or desires to improve the delivery or reliability of electricity within these lands.

DOE recognizes that some of the survey questions may present a challenge for Tribes to answer, or a Tribe may choose not to answer a question for various reasons. This is understood and the DOE will respect the wishes of Tribal governments in the level of participation they decide to have with the survey.

We also recognize the vast diversity that exists throughout the Tribal community, including land tenure, geopolitical situations, geography, culture, and heritage (I'm sure I missed a few). The Tribal Lands Electrification Study is aimed to address this diversity and to illuminate the nature of electrification on various Tribal lands.

This level of information will assist the DOE in determining particular areas of need and I believe this information will one day inform specific policies and strategies for working directly with Tribal governments to meet the expressed needs for electrification on Tribal lands nationwide. So, please be aware that this survey instrument and contact will be coming, that you will be hearing directly from us in approximately four weeks, and that we seek your participation and coordination.

We look forward to working with you and getting a more complete picture of the state of electrification throughout Indian Country. Thank you and best wishes for a good meeting session and a positive year.